

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 19732 181510Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PPT-01 SCA-01 CU-02 VO-03 SS-15 L-03
USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2222
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC, CSCE, PFOR, CVIS, UR
SUBJECT: AMCITS REFUSED ENTRY TO USSR

REF: STATE 306295, MOSCOW 19676

BEGIN SUMMARY -- AMCITS EDWARD ALEXANDER AND WIFE LEAH R. ALEXANDER (PPT # UNKNOWN) WERE DETAINED IN TRANSIT HOTEL AT SHERMET'YEVO AIRPORT FROM APPROXIMATELY 1 A.M. UNTIL APPROXIMATELY 8:00 P.M. DECEMBER 17. THEY WERE REFUSED ENTRY USSE ALTHOUGH THEY ARRIVED WITH VALID VISAS AND CONFIRMED INTOURIST RESERVATIONS. AT DIRECTION OF SOVIET BORDER TROOPS, ALEXANDERS WERE GIVEN RESERVATIONS ON BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHT FOR LONDON WHICH DEPARTED EVENING DECEMBER 17. ACCORDING TO BORDER TROOPS AT AIRPORT, REASON FOR DETENTION AND REFUSAL OF ENTRY WAS DISCOVERY IN ALEXANDER'S SUITCASE OF NUMEROUS HEBREW LANGUAGE BOOKS, MATERIALS ON JEWISH CULTURE, LETTERS ADDRESSED TO SOVIET JEWISH "REFUSENIKS," AND ADDRESSES OF SOVIET JEWS WHOM ALEXANDERS PLANNED TO CONTACT. END SUMMARY.

1. EDWARD ALEXANDER TELEPHONED EMBASSY CONSULAR DUTY OFFICER AT APPROXIMATELY 1:00 A.M. DECEMBER 17 TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE DURING CUSTOMS INSPECTION OF HIS LUGGAGE AT SHERMET'YEVO
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 19732 181510Z

AIRPORT. CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES HAD INFORMED ALEXANDER THAT SEVERAL BOOKS ON JEWISH CULTURE (SOME IN HEBREW) AND OTHER MATERIAL DEALING WITH JEWISH THEMES WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED INTO USSR. HE ALSO TOLD CONSOFF THAT CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES HAD NOT PERMITTED HIM TO BRING IN TWO LETTERS ADDRESSED TO SOVIET JEWISH REFUSENIKS, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD ALLOWED HIM TO

MAIL THEM FROM AIRPORT. CONSOFF TOLD ALEXANDER THAT SOVIET CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES HAD JURISDICTION IN SUCH MATTERS BUT THAT EMBASSY WOULD BE WILLING TO ASK THAT ANYTHING CONFISCATED BE RETURNED TO HIM. AFTER TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN CONSOFF AND CUSTOMS OFFICIAL, AGREEMENT WAS REACHED THAT ALEXANDER AND WIFE WOULD BE PERMITTED TO GO TO THEIR HOTEL WITHOUT MATERIAL IN QUESTION, WHICH WOULD BE RETURNED TO THEM UPON THEIR SCHEDULED DEPARTURE FROM LENINGRAD JANUARY 3.

2. AT APPROXIMATELY 1:00 P.M. SAME DAY, ALEXANDER TELEPHONED EMBASSY TO INFORM US THAT HE AND HIS WIFE WERE STILL UNDER DETENTION IN TRANSIT "HOTEL" AT SHEREMET'YEVO TO WHICH THEY HAD BEEN MOVED AFTER CUSTOMS INCIDENT. HE TOLD CONSOFF THAT THEY DESIRED TO CANCEL TOUR, WHICH WOULD HAVE TAKEN THEM TO MOSCOW, MINSK, RIGA, AND LENINGRAD, AND LEAVE USSR FOR LONDON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. CONSOFF TELEPHONED INTOURIST WHICH AGREED TO REFUND PRICE OF TOUR UPON REQUEST OF ALEXANDER'S TRAVEL AGENCY, BUT PROFESSED NOT TO BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT ENDING THEIR DETENTION. EMBASSY THEN CONTACTED MFA CONSULAR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL N.G. BULAVIN, BUT ALEXANDERS REMAINED IN THE LOCKUP "HOTEL" AT MID-AFTERNOON. CONSOFF THEN WENT TO SHEREMET'YEVO AIRPORT AND, AFTER TALKING BRIEFLY WITH BORDER TROOPS, SUCCEEDED IN HAVING ALEXANDERS RELEASED FROM HOTEL AND PLACED ON FLIGHT FOR LONDON. CONSOFF WAITED AT TRANSIT TICKET DESK TO SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH ALEXANDERS, BUT THEY WERE APPARENTLY BROUGHT DIRECTLY FROM HOTEL, CHECKED IN, AND ALLOWED INTO DEPARTURE LOUNGE. ALTHOUGH CONSOFF MANAGED ENTRY INTO DEPARTURE LOUNGE, ALEXANDERS COULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED AMONG CROWD OF DEPARTEES.

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 19732 181510Z

3. IN REPLY TO CONSOFF'S INQUIRY ABOUT REASON FOR DETENTION, BORDER TROOPS OFFICIAL REPLIED THAT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT ALEXANDERS INTENDED TO DISTRIBUTE "ZIONIST", "ANTI-SOVIET" MATERIAL WHICH IS FORBIDDEN BY SOVIET LAW. HE ALSO STATED THAT ALEXANDER AND WIFE HAD "ADDRESSES" AND "LETTERS" WHICH INDICATED THAT PURPOSE OF THEIR VISIT WAS NOT TOURISM.

4. COMMENT. ALEXANDER CASE IS THIRD CASE REPORTED RECENTLY OF EXPULSION OR DENIAL OF ENTRY TO AMERICANS ENTERING USSR WITH RELIGIOUS LITERATURE OBJECTIONABLE TO SOVIET AUTHORITIES. THESE INCIDENTS, AND THE RECENT AFFAIR INVOLVING FRENCH AND NORWEGIANS ARRESTED FOR DISTRIBUTION OF "ANTI-SOVIET" LITERATURE, DEMONSTRATE THAT SOVIETS INTEND TO TAKE A TOUGH LINE ON THIS ISSUE. CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN ALERTED TO BE PARTICULARLY WARY OF FOREIGNERS ENTERING WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF MATERIAL ON JEWISH CULTURAL THEMES AS THE DECEMBER 21 DATES FOR BEGINNING OF "JEWISH CULTURE" SYMPOSIUM APPROACHES (REFTELS). ALEXANDER ALSO TOOK A PERSONALLY BELIGERANT ATTITUDE

WITH CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES WHICH MAY HAVE EXACERBATED SOVIET
TREATMENT OF THE COUPLE. HE TOLD CONSOFF THAT HE INTENDS TO
CONTACT HIS SENATOR ABOUT THE INCIDENT, AND EMBASSY WOULD
NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE DETAILS APPEAR IN THE PRESS.

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Message Attributes

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